

March 4, 2016

To the members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

I submitted written testimony for your committee hearing yesterday, March 3, in support of H.B. 5408, An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit. After attending the hearing and listening to much of the testimony presented, I would like to supplement my statement in response to some of the concerns that were expressed.

At the hearing it was stated that some 228,000 individuals hold permits to carry a handgun in the state of Connecticut. If this number is correct, that means there are more than 3.3 million residents of this state who choose *not* to arm themselves as they go about their daily business. A large number of those millions would surely be as surprised as I was to learn that carrying firearms in public is legally permissible in this state; everyone I've asked recently is equally surprised to learn this; we all thought it was not allowed here. Most of us are not accustomed to seeing armed persons in shops and restaurants and walking down the sidewalk — that is not expected behavior, it is not the norm, and it is frightening to most people.

If carrying a handgun in public is legally allowed in this state, then it is at least some comfort to know that anyone doing so has an official permit attesting to their suitability for this act. However, there is no way for the rest of us to know that an armed person does have such a permit — and evidently, as the law stands now, it's not really possible for a police officer to determine that either. I would very much like to be certain that, if anyone is carrying a gun in public, they in fact have a permit to do so. I would very much prefer that police officers in this state have the clear authority to make sure that is the case, whether the weapon is concealed or not, and whether or not the person is acting in a strange or threatening manner. I believe it is essential to enact H.B. 5408 to make it clear that officers do have that authority.

There was also a lot of talk about the Fourth Amendment, and claims that an officer of the law asking a gun-carrying person to show their permit constitutes an illegal search and seizure. I hope it is obvious to the members of the committee that it is no such thing. No one is actually being "detained," no one is searching anyone, and nothing is being "seized." Many statements were made yesterday based on the premise that asking to see a permit is an illegal search and seizure, when in fact that is not true at all. The law requires persons carrying firearms in public to have a legal permit to do so, and to have the permit with them, and there is no way for police officers or the public to be sure that is the case unless they are required to present the permit when asked by an officer of the law.

There were also numerous comparisons made between being asked to show a permit for carrying a handgun in public and a traffic stop while driving. I hope it

is obvious to the committee that this analogy is equally misleading. There is no valid comparison between driving a motor vehicle and carrying a deadly weapon. A gun is designed, manufactured, and intended for one purpose: to shoot people, and likely kill them. Such a weapon is inherently a hazard to public safety, and needs to be regulated accordingly. The public needs to be assured that anyone and everyone they see with a gun is properly qualified to possess it.

It may be the case that more than 99% of people carrying guns have the proper permit and will gladly present it when asked. But that means there are some who do not — and they should not be walking around armed. Allowing them to exploit such an obvious loophole in the current law is an enormous danger to the law-abiding, non-gun-carrying majority of the public. Officers of the law need to be able to require that such a person present a valid permit on request.

Thank you very much,

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